



1224 Mill St, Bld B, Ste 223
East Berlin, CT 06023
203-238-1207
FAX (203) 238-3437
www.ctnurses.org

Hearing Governors Budget
2018-2019
Appropriations Committee
February 23, 2017

Good Morning: Representative Walker, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Ziobron and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I want to thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA).

I am Mary Jane Williams Ph.D., RN current chairperson of Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association, a Founding Member of Health Assistance InterVention Network (HAVEN) and I am the past Vice President of the HAVEN Board. I am speaking for the 13,193 Licensed Practical Nurses, 64,455 Registered Professional Nurses and 4,750 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses. These Nurses are your constituents.

I speak in strong opposition to the Proposed 2018-2019 Governors' Budget request related to funding for the Health Assistance inter-Vention Education Network (HAVEN). The proposal allows the state to take fees (\$5.00 per licensed health care professional) that were legislated to support HAVEN, and put them in the general fund, which does not provide resources to HAVEN or any other confidential program for licensed health care professionals.

HAVEN serves **all licensed health care professionals**; physicians, dentists, physician assistants, veterinarians, pharmacists, advanced practice registered nurses, nurses and many others.

The Connecticut Nurses Association worked toward the establishment of a confidential, privileged assistance program for 21 years. In 2005 , Physicians, Dentists, Veterinarians, Nurses, and Physician Assistants (representing the founding members of HAVEN) formed a Coalition to promote legislation that resulted in the formation of HAVEN. This Coalition recognized that HAVEN was a 'win-win' for the health care professionals, the public and the Department of Public Health. The confidential program for health care professionals provided a pathway for professionals to seek assistance, which protects the public and lightened the work load of the Department of Public Health.

What is HAVEN? HAVEN "is the sole health Inter-Vention assistance program authorized by state law to serve virtually all licensed healthcare professionals." Governor Jodie Rell signed it into law (Public Act 07-103) on June 12, 1007. HAVEN offers a confidential alternative to "public disciplinary action for professionals suffering from chemical dependency, emotional or behavioral disorder, or physical or mental illness." Previous to HAVEN 75% of the disciplinary action the State Board of Examiners of Nursing (BOEN) takes against nurses were related to chemical dependency or abuse. Licensed health care professionals went under consent, lost their licenses, jobs, homes etc. HAVEN creates access to private, confidential treatment. Medical professionals receive treatment and extended follow up. Recidivism is low because of the long term monitoring.

Healthcare professionals suffer from chronic physical illness, mental illness, substance use disorders at the same rate as the general population. There is no immunity from depression (6.7%), bipolar disorder (2.6%), anxiety (18%), sleep disorders (26%), and substance use disorders (10% to 18%). However, problems related to stress, anxiety,

mental health and addiction in our society have increased exponentially. Reporting has also increased (which is a socially responsible behavior) and as a result numbers of clients has increased as financial resources decreased.

Funding Issue:

Since 2007, HAVEN has been self-funded, and supported more than 1,000 professionals. Prior to the passage of 19a- 12a, many of these professionals would have required the resources of the Department of Public Health. Although, **HAVEN is a huge cost and resource saving for the Department, the state did not provide funding to support the program. Due to the demand for services and difficulty sustaining the program on self-funding, in 2015 the licensed health care professional organizations agreed upon legislation to fund HAVEN through a \$5.00 fee added to every licensed health care professional annual license renewal. (Although these funds have been collected they have NEVER been dispersed to HAVEN.)**

The 5.00 charge was added to the current licensing fee for all licensed Health Care professionals covered by HAVEN. The increase was to go directly to HAVEN. **As a result of the membership organizations concerns, the professional assistance account was established so that the professionals could be assured that the additional \$5.00 licensure fee was being invested in the health and wellness of themselves or their colleagues. (See, Public Act 15-244 Sections 137, 137 and Public Act 15-5 Sec. 479) and not redirected by the Department of Public Health or by the needs of the general fund. Since its effective date, October 1, 2015, the Department of Public Health has not transferred any funds to HAVEN. The amount in the fund now exceeds \$ 800,000.00 (Dinnan, 2017).**

The Governor's budget proposal, takes the \$5.00 legislated increase to annual licensure to support HAVEN, and puts those fees in the General Fund, which provides no support to HAVEN.

It is every nurses ethical responsibility /obligation to report and impaired provider. It is the States responsibility to protect the health of its citizens inclusive of the providers of Health Care. I find it difficult to believe that the State and our elected officials would support directing funds that were dedicated to protecting professionals and the Public to the General Fund. We recognize the budgetary constraints in our State, but we all have an ETHICAL responsibility to our residents as well as our providers. Our providers trusted that the license increase would go directly to HAVEN, and I strongly suggest that those dollars earmarked for HAVEN go to HAVEN.

Therefore I urge you to direct the HAVEN FUNDS TO HAVEN it is our responsibility as Citizens of Connecticut and Professionals to protect the Citizens of Connecticut inclusive of our health care providers.

Thank you

Mary Jane M. Williams PhD., RN

Chair, Government Relation, Connecticut Nurses Association

Professor Emeritus Central Connecticut State University